SEVENTEEN YEARS BEFORE THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA...

I PRAY THIS LETTER REACHES YOU.
IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRÔ COULD BE SPARED. THE ONLY MISGIVING I HAVE CONCERNS MY FAMILY.

LAST NIGHT I HAD HIM SENT OFF TO YOU, MASTER KANEMAKI JISAI.

WE ARE TAKING OUR LAST STAND.

THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE, I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.

CALMLY, I AWAIT THE MOMENT I MAY DIE FOR MY LORD.

THE MAJESTIC KITANOŠÔ CASTLE IS ON THE VERGE OF FALLING INTO ENEMY HANDS.

#128 | The Letter
THIS WILL BE INCONVENIENT...
CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!

YOU BRATS!!

HEE HEE!

HEY!

HM?

GOOD GOING, TARO!

RUN!!
YOU TO STAY AWAY SCRAMBLING (FTER US JUST)... rf

HARMLESS AS LONG AS YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE.

HE COMES SCRAMBLING AFTER US JUST FOR A BIT OF FISH. BUT HE'S SO FUN TO TEASE.

I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT CRACKPOT!!

MY APOLOGIES.

LISTEN UP!

HE'S HARMLESS AS LONG AS YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE.

THere MUST BE A REASON WHY HE ISOLATES HIMSELF AND LIVES AS A HERMIT.

NOT EVERYONE'S LIKE US.
FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM, HE WON'T BE AROUND TOO MUCH LONGER ANYWAYS.
I WONT EAT ANYMORE.

I WONT DRINK EITHER...

I'LL JUST WITHER AWAY LIKE A DRIED UP TREE.
I, KANEMAKI JISAI...

...SEEK A SOLEMN END TO MY LIFE.

If only my newborn son KOJIRÔ could be spared.

THE YEAR 1563 CE

The eleventh year of Tensho. The twenty-third day of the fourth month

Sasaki, former Sukeyasî discipie...

A few days have passed since I received this letter.

...They probably couldn't make it this far...
SASAKI...

ZZZ...

SASAKI...

SASAKI!

WHERE ARE YOU, SASAKI?!!

THE WATER JUG'S EMPTY. GO FILL IT UP!!

HMM?

FICHP HE'S RIGHT HERE!

WHUD
YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO LEARN FROM ME?

I CAN CLAIM I’VE MASTERED THE CHUJO-RYU!!

I AM LEAVING YOUR SCHOOL.

NOW I’VE DEFEATED EVERY ONE OF YOUR SENIOR DISCIPLES!!

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO LEARN FROM ME?

FOOL! YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO CLAIM YOU’VE TRANSCENDED THIS STYLE WITHIN A MERE FIVE YEARS?

AND I’LL PROVE IT TO YOU... IF YOU LIKE.

BECAUSE I DON’T.
He's been sitting there the whole time.

How many days has it been?

Like a rock.
HE'S FINALLY LOST HIS MIND.

UNMARRIED WITHOUT ANY FRIENDS.

ONLY THE SWORD...

A LIFE DEDICATED TO THE SWORD.

BUT NOW...

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I CONSIDERED MYSELF INVINCIBLE.
HA HA
HA HA!

I AM OLD AND I HAVE NOTHING.

HA HA
HA HA!

LOOK AT THIS MIGHTY OCEAN.
HOPEFULLY SOMEONE WORTHY AND RELIABLE...

I WONDER WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BRING HIM HERE...

I’LL VANISH WITHOUT A TRACE, BARELY NOTICED.

THEY Didn’T MAKE IT...

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN INTERCEPTED BY THEIR ENEMY.

A LIFE AS TRIVIAL AS FOAM FROM THE SEA.
I'M GOING TO DIE.
Vagabond
(I'm going to die.)
SPLISH

HAK!

KOF!

KOF!

GASP!

COULD THEY BE-?!
IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRO COULD BE SPARED...

THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE...

I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.
KOJIRÔ!

IS IT REALLY YOU?

KRAKK
THEY MUST HAVE GOTTEN FROM THE LOOKS OF HER, SHE'S OF SAMURAI STOCK...

MUST HAVE BEEN SASAKI'S

PLISH

 THEY MUST HAVE GOTTEN CAUGHT IN THE SPRING TIDE...

THAT LITTLE BOAT COULDN'T TAKE IT...

YOU'RE A LUCKY CHILD.

STOP YOUR CRYING.
WAAA!!  WAAA!!

ARE YOU HUNGRY?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

I CAN'T NURSE YOU.

WHAT IS IT?

WHY ARE YOU CRYING?!
CRY, KOJIRO.

NOW YOU'RE MAKING ME CRY.

DON'T CRY, KOJIRO.

HERE...
It must have been scary.

You must have been so lonely.
I'm so sorry.

Wahh!
His pure and innocent eyes look right through me...

Frightens me.

I really am hopeless.

Have I ever done such a thing?

When was the last time I held someone with these hands?
AND ONCE THEY WERE BEATEN BY THE SWORD, MY LIFE WAS OVER.

THESE HANDS HAVE ONLY LIVED BY THE SWORD.

!!
NO! BE CAREFUL!
WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE SUCH A LONG SWORD?

IT'S SO LONG.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.

WAHHH

WAHHH

FSH

HERE...
YOU'RE AN ODD ONE.
MAYBE I'LL LIVE A LITTLE WHILE LONGER...
(I'M GOING TO LIVE.)
#130 Glimmering Waves

BEAUTIFUL...

ISN'T IT, KOJIRO?
...I've never sought help from anyone.

Come to think of it...

Ma!!

He hit me!!

Ah...

Let 'em be.

Hm?!

Let 'em be.

I'm hungry...
HAH.

LET EM' BE!!

GASP!

HE HIT ME!

WAH!

WAH!

WAW!

WAW!

AH!

AH!

WAW!
HE NEEDS TO NURSE...
HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A BAD MAN...

BUT HE IS A BIT GRUFF.

THEY SAY THEY SAW HIM BURY A CORPSE...

THE CHILDREN...

WHAT A SHOCK.
...I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING FOR ANYONE.

COME TO THINK OF IT...

I'VE NEVER THOUGHT TO CARE FOR ANYONE ELSE LIKE THIS.

NEVER GAVE THEM MUCH THOUGHT AT ALL.

EVEN MY DISCIPLES...
IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRÔ COULD BE SPARED...

LAST NIGHT I HAD HIM SENT OFF TO YOU, MASTER KANEMAKI JISAI.

YOU REALLY DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE TO TURN TO, DID YOU, SASAKI?

OF ALL PEOPLE I WAS THE ONLY ONE YOU COULD TURN TO...

THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE, I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.
I just don't have what it takes...
WAKH
WAKH
WAKH

GASP!

WHAT IS IT?

DO YOU NEED CHANGING?
I never once thought the ocean was beautiful.

But it is. It's so beautiful...

...isn't it, Kojirō?
IT'S AN OCEAN OF MUD.
GIVE HIM BACK!

GIVE MY CHILD BACK TO ME!!
YOU LIKE SWORDS, DON'T YOU, KOJIRO?

HE STOPPED.

WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT? HE'S OK. THE ONE WHO WELLED... HE WAS JUST ANOTHER MOUTH TO FEED...

GIVE HIM BACK!

HE DOESN'T STOP CRYING ONCE HE GETS STARTED, HUH?

WAHH
HAMM?

AHH...

AHH...

GASP!
BRING HIM BACK ANY TIME HE NEEDS MILK.
SHOW SOME GRATITUDE.

......
NO ONE'S EVER STARED AT ME LIKE THIS.

COME TO THINK OF IT...

I WON'T LOOK AWAY FROM YOU EVER AGAIN, KOJIRO.
Vagabond
THE MAN WHO HAD FORMERLY DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD...

...now devoted his life to raising this boy.

BUT WITH MUCH KINDNESS...

WAA!

...he became discouraged and gave up.

ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS...

...from the people around him...

...he raised the boy as best he could.
THREE YEARS HAD PASSED.

KOJIRO. I WONDER WHY IT IS...

WHY HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED HOW TO SPEAK A SINGLE WORD YET?

AHH...

AHH...

...
Hey! You there!

That sword is as long as I am tall.

Who is this child?
I'm home.
How could master swordsman Kanemaki Jisai not have responded to that attack?!

The rumor that you gave up on the sword must be true!!

My apologies.

Nostalgia overcomes me.

Ito!!
CALLOUS HE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER HIS SENIORS. DIFFERENT. I CAN'T RECALL HIS FACE EITHER.

WHO IS THAT CHILD?

NO!! STAY INSIDE, KOJIRO!!

IMPOSSIBLE. HE'S MINE.

SASAKI...?

HMM...

BUT I'M NO DIFFERENT. I CAN'T RECALL HIS FACE EITHER.

THE ONLY DISCIPLE'S FACE I REMEMBER...

HE'S SO CALLOUS HE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER HIS SENIORS.
YOU CAN SEE I'VE GIVEN UP THE SWORD.

I AM HOPELESS.

...IS THAT OF ITO YAGORO, THE MAN WHO DEFEATED ME.

ARE YOU HERE TO RIDICULE ME?

THOUGH I HEAR YOU CALL YOURSELF ITTŌSAI NOW!

WHY ARE YOU HERE, YAGORO?!

THERE'S NOTHING TO BE NOSTALGIC ABOUT!!

I AM ON THE MUSHASHUGYO—THE WARRIOR'S PILGRIMAGE. I JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN THE AREA.

LEAVE!!

LEAVE!!

LEAVE!!

I'LL BE ON MY WAY THEN.
CAN TRADE IT FOR FOOD.

I'LL LEAVE THIS. PERHAPS YOU CAN TRADE IT FOR FOOD.

...
THAT CHILD MAY BE THE SON OF A FORMER DISCIPLE, BUT RAISING A DEAF CHILD IS NO EASY FEAT.

PLEASE TAKE CARE!!

YOU'RE STILL BLIND TO EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF.

HEH HEH HEH!!
DAMN IT. I'M STILL SHAKING.
"You're still blind to everyone but yourself."

"You haven't changed at all."
IT'S NOT TRUE!!!

NO!!
FICH

HMPH!

ARRGH!!

YAHH!!

FOOSH

SLISH
I'm worthless...

Worthless as this seaweed!!
(ITTO ITTOSAI: TOUGH GUY WHO EVENTUALLY BECOMES THE FOUNDER OF THE ITTO-RYU SCHOOL OF SWORD-FIGHTING.)
“YOURE STILL BLIND TO EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF.”

I THOUGHT I’D WATCHED OVER YOU THESE PAST THREE YEARS...

I COULDN’T EVEN TELL...

BUT NONE OF MY WORDS EVER REACHED YOU.

NONE OF THEM.
I always enjoyed our conversations but I was really only talking to myself...!!
Splash!

YAH!

NO, KOJIRO!!

WHEN DID YOU COME OVER HERE?
WAIT.

THIS IS DANGEROUS.

KAWW

KAWW

KAWW

I GUESS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WAIT!

WAIT!

WAIT.

ANOTHER TEN YEARS...

THAT'S TOO HEAVY FOR YOU...

NO, EVEN AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS YOU MIGHT NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO HANDLE THAT SWORD.
STAY AWAY FROM THE SWORD.

NO. THAT'S NOT FOR YOU...

AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE FOR YOU...

YOU ENDED UP HERE WITH ME...

POOR CHILD...

YOU WERE BORN INTO A SAMURAI FAMILY...

YOUR EARS CAN'T HEAR A THING.

...ONLY TO LOSE YOUR PARENTS IN A WAR.
HOW WILL YOU LIVE?
KLSSH

KOJIRO

SLSSH

HE CAN'T HEAR ME SCREAM!
HE HAS NO ONE ELSE BUT ME!!

WITHOUT ME...

...HE WON'T SURVIVE!!
HUF
HUF
I'LL
PROTECT
YOU!!

UNDER-
STAND
?!

AHHH...

AHHH!

AHHA!

I'LL
MAKE
SURE
YOU'RE
OUT
OF
HARM'S
WAY!!

SNF

SNF

HUF

HUF

TP
TP
TP
TP

WHAT'S
WRONG?

GAHH!

TP
FPHP

AHHH!

YOU'RE
A
GOOD
BOY,
KOJIRÔ!!

SUCH A
STRONG
BOY!!

YOU'RE
SO
STRONG!!

?
A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR PARENTS...?

...A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR PARENTS...?

COULD THAT BE...

I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.

IT'S A DANGEROUS WICKED THING...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE GODS HAVE PLANNED FOR YOU...

I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.

BUT I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.
Vagabond
MUST TAKE CARE OF THIS.
#133 To Live by the Sword
"EE-"

Shape your mouth like this.

Kojiro, this is pronounced "EE-"

As in "I-RO-HA."

From the poem-based syllabary.

Then you exhale from deep inside your throat...

...and say "EE-"

You've got it! Now from the throat...

EE-

Now, you... like this.

You can do it!

Now just exhale.

EE-

That's right.
NE-KO (CAT)

AHH!! SWIP

......
WHAT AM I DOING? WHY ISN'T HE RAISING HIM TO BE A GOOD MAN.
A GOOD MAN...

WHAT?!
LEARN TO BE A FISHERMAN?

WHY ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

ME.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

YOU HAVE TO KNOW THE OCEAN INSIDE AND OUT TO BE A FISHERMAN.

THERE'S MORE TO THE SEA THAN WHAT'S ON THE SURFACE.
You must also be familiar with every ridge and crevice of the ocean floor.

But I've only lived by the sword. What can I do? I've never done anything else.

I must find a trade.

Otherwise, it will be impossible to raise him to be a decent human being. Kojirō will end up starving.

What's that old coot thinking?

How long nerve does he think we've been doing this?
LIVING BY THE SWORD...

I'M HOME!

HMM?
KOJIRO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THAT'S DANGEROUS.
WHAT AN ODD SIGHT...
WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

LITTLE ONE...

THAT'S A MIGHTY SWORD.

IT'S BIGGER THAN YOU.
You want to show your sword off to me, is that it?

Let's see it then...

It is indeed impressive.

It's the price I pay for a long journey. Forgive me.

I thought I could go without bathing a while longer...

I smell that bad?

Your nose is too sensitive.
EVEN MOST FULL-GROWN ADULTS WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE THAT THING.

HA HA HA!

YOUR FATHER MUST BE A SAMURAI.

SSHF

HEYYYY...

SSHF

LITTLE ONE!

HEYYYY!!

HEYYYY!
HE'S DEAF...

FWAP

[Scene: A boy is running through the sand, trying to avoid something. A man wearing a hat and a sword is behind him, chasing him.]
I see... that sword invigorates you.

Hmmm...

However...
IT CAN ALSO BE THE DEATH OF YOU.
LOOK OVER AND PROTECT THIS CHILD...

MAY THIS SWORD...

FICH

FICH

SNF
STOPPED CRYING ALREADY?

WHAT AN ODD CHILD.

SHUF

PERHAPS I'LL PAY OLD MAN YAGYU A VISIT.

SHUF

HMM... WHERE SHOULD I GO?
THIS IS ONLY TO MAKE A LIVING.

SO I CAN RAISE KOJIRO TO BE A DECENT MAN.

CHUJO-RYU SWORDSMASTERSHIP INSTRUCTION, KANEMAKI JISAI
GOSLICK, YOU'VE DONE SOME SWORD-FIGHTING.

HOW'S THE OLD COOT'S FORM?

FWISH

FWISH

THERE ISN'T MUCH BEHIND IT.
It's more of a mid-sized sword.

But that crazy old coot's wooden sword is too long.

He's trying to swindle us.

He thinks villagers like us can't tell the difference.

Keep swinging away, old man. Who'd take lessons from him?!

Look! He's already out of breath.

.....
KOJIRO, I'M HOME!

SHF
SHF
UMF

LOOKING FOR YOUR LONG SWORD, KOJIRO?
HEY...

YOU MUST'VE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY LOOKING FOR IT.

DIDN'T FIND IT, DID YOU?

GAHHS...
IT'S NOT GOOD FOR A FOUR-YEAR-OLD TO CLING TO A SWORD THE WAY YOU DO...

KOJIRO...

AHHH!

I'VE HIDDEN IT AWAY.

YOU MUST TRY TO BE MORE LIKE A NORMAL CHILD.

I MADE THIS TOP FOR YOU.

SHAP
GAUHH!

IT'S TIME TO MAKE SUPPER.

YOU HAVE TO LIVE A DECENT LIFE!!

AH!

AH!

AH!
A SWORD IS NO TOY!!

YOU CAN'T HEAR MY SHOUTING...

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!! YOU MUST STAY AWAY FROM SUCH THINGS!!

AHH...
THE SWORD CAN DRIVE MEN TO MADNESS...

TO LIVE BY THE SWORD...

IF YOU NEED TO SEE WHAT IT CAN DO TO A MAN...

...JUST LOOK AT ME...

...I'M SORRY...

DON'T YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH THE KIDS IN THE VILLAGE, KOJIRO?

YOU MIGHT MAKE FRIENDS!

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE...

I...
YOU SHOULD BECOME A DECENT HUMAN BEING.

KOJIRÔ...

DON'T YOU WORRY. I CLEANED THAT SWORD AND PUT IT AWAY.

I'LL GIVE IT BACK TO YOU WHEN YOU'RE OLDER AND ALL GROWN...
STAND? GOOD GOING, KOJIRO!!

THAT'S RIGHT -- SWORD!

THAT'S IT!

SWORD!!

HA HA!

UHH...

YOU UNDERSTAND?

KOJIRO...

NO SWORD FOR YOU!!

GOOD GOING, KOJIRO!!

AHH!!

HA HA HA!!

KOJIRO!!
FSSHHHHH

PLISH

PLISH
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE!!

DAMN HIM! HE'S NOT OUR MASTER!
HE DOESN'T PROTECT US!!

SHH!! LOWER YOUR VOICE!!

FUDO CHOPPED OFF HIS ARM!
WE'VE GOTTA EAT TOO.
WE DON'T HAVE AS MUCH TO OFFER TO MASTER FUDO.

OUR CATCH OF FISH IS SMALLER THAN IT USUALLY IS...

HE ASKED FOR MERCY FOR THIS YEAR'S MEAGER OFFERING...
AND...

MY FATHER APOLOGIZED TO HIM...
SO I SHOULD SIT BACK AFTER HE'S CUT OFF MY FATHER'S ARM?!

IF NO ONE ELSE WILL, THEN IT'S UP TO ME!

AND HE CUT THEM DOWN ALL BY HIMSELF...

HE WAS THE VILLAGE'S SAVIOR.

WITHOUT MASTER FUDO, THIS VILLAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN RAVAGED...

THOSE BANDITS WOULD'VE DESTROYED EVERYTHING.

GOSLIKE, YOU WERE STILL A CHILD SO YOU DON'T REMEMBER...

IF I'D CUT OFF HIS ARM, I'M SURE IT WOULD HAVE WORKED.

KYUSAKU, YOUR DAUGHTER JUST HAD A BIRTHDAY, RIGHT?

CAN YOU ACCEPT THAT?!

GASP!

HMPH!!

GOSLIKE!! IF HE HEARS YOU, THEN IT WON'T JUST BE AN ARM YOU'LL LOSE...!!

...BUT NOW MASTER FUDO IS JUST A PARASITE!!

HE MAY HAVE ONCE BEEN A SAVIOR OF THIS VILLAGE!!

CAN'T BE HELPED.
AFTER ALL, HE'S FORMIDABLE ENOUGH TO CALL HIMSELF A SERVANT OF FUDO-MYO-O, THE BUDDHIST DEITY OF THE MARTIAL ARTS. AN AMATEUR SWORDSMAN LIKE YOU WOULD BE NO MATCH AGAINST HIM.

WE'VE PAID HIM BACK...

THAT HAPPENED OVER TEN YEARS AGO...

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.
I HAVE A PLAN.

THEN WHO CAN?

SLUMP

WE'RE OUT OF FOOD.
I'M EXHAUSTED...

PLISH

HAH!

PLISH
HEH HEH!

SLOWLY...

FILTHY CRAZY COOT'S KID!

CRAZY OLD COOT'S KID!

SNIF SNIF

HE CAN'T HEAR US ANYWAY!

GASP!

YOU'RE DIRTYING UP THE SEA.

GO AWAY!
YOU STINK!

AND YOU'RE DEAF!

SMELLY SMELLY...

FREAK'S KID!
た

い

I-TA-I (PAIN)
I knew he wasn't so tough.

Who spread that rumor anyway?

You were just scared 'cause he's bigger than you.

Was not!

HA HA HA!

Run away!

Yahh!

Thud

FHAK

GASP!

...?!

FSSHH
ARRGH!

YOU CAN'T EVEN HEAR.

SPLESS!

GASP

THOK ARGH!

AHH!

PLSSH
WE CAN'T REALLY AFFORD TO HELP OUT ANYONE...

IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE MUCH FOOD TO SPARE...

OUR KIDS ARE GETTING BIGGER...

WE CAN'T REALLY AFFORD TO HELP OUT ANYONE...

AND IT MIGHT NOT HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH YOU, BUT...

...THIS VILLAGE IS IN BIG TROUBLE ON ACCOUNT OF MASTER FUDO...

PHEW...
FWMP

I'M SORRY.

OH...

AMAZING HOW QUICKLY THEY GROW UP...

.......

MY OLDEST GIRL, ORIN. YOU KNOW HER.

WHO'S THAT?
WON'T HAVE NO WORRIES IF SHE'D JUST STAY A CHILD...

DIDN'T COME UP WITH ANY SOLUTIONS LAST NIGHT...

FICH

...!!
WE LIVE SO CLOSE AND YET THIS IS OUR FIRST MEETING.

KANEMAKI JISAI...

WHO ARE YOU?
(SNIF...)

<
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, OLD MAN?!

Hey! What are you doing?

Hey!

I haven't done anything to you!

I want to test your skill.
HEY!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, OLD MAN?!

WAIT!!

YAH!!

FICH

FICH

YAHH!!

TUNK
BUT ALL I COULD DO WAS STEP BACK.

A HUNCHED OVER OLD MAN.

YOU COULD HARDLY CALL IT AN ATTACK.

MY INSTINCTS HAVE GOTTEN RUSTY...!!

ALL THESE MOVES OCCUR TO ME AT ONCE...

I COULD GRAB A ROCK AND TOSS IT...

OR THROW THIS BAG AT HIM...

...OR I COULD RUN INTO THE WOODS AND USE THE TREES AS COVER.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, OLD MAN?!!
MAGNIFICENT...

KANEMAKI JISAI...

PLEASE, YOU MUST SAVE OUR VILLAGE...

HUUH?
HEY... [ SATA: INFANT ]

HE, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING?

FINCH

KAMEKICHI !!

YAHH!
THOK

ARGH!

DESCENDED /
FROM THE
HEAVENS!

I STARTED CALLING MYSELF / THAT YESTERDAY, REMEMBER?!

I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME TENKI!

TE-TENKI...

THAT HURT...

LIKE A DEMON DESCENDED FROM THE HEAVENS!

KUSANAGI TENKI, THE SWORD DEMON! I STARTED CALLING MYSELF THAT YESTERDAY, REMEMBER?!

SORRY!

I TRAINED MYSELF CHOPPING THE TALL GRASS OF SHINPO VILLAGE...

HMM...

THE SWORD... THAT'S RIGHT. YUP, IT'S A GOOD NAME.

I'M DEVOTING MY LIFE TO THE SWORD.

KUSANAGI TENKI!
YOU WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN?

WHY'RE YOU GUYS KNEELING IN FRONT OF THE CRAZY OLD COOT'S KID?

....

HEH...

I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME TENKI, YOU IDIOT.

GOOD GOING, KAMEKICHI!

HA HA HA! HE'S SCARED!!
THE FREAK’S KID IS BACK.
AHHH!

WHOA!!

HEM, THAT STICK'S TOO LONG FOR YOU!!
GASP!

NOW YOU'LL GET A TASTE OF TENKI'S SWORD.

THWAK

HEE!

HEE!

HEE!
What was that, elder?

You don't believe that sign he put up, do you?!

He's lying about all that Chūjō-ryū nonsense!!

How is that old coot going to kill Master Fudo?!

Kenemaki jisai?

We're not involved.

As long as he succeeds...

Silence...

We'll just wait for our next opportunity.

No, even if he fails...
IF THEY CUT EACH OTHER DOWN...

THAT'S FINE, TOO.

HUF

YOU'RE BUILT SKINNY LIKE A TWIG.

HUF

HOW CAN YOU SWING A LONG POLE LIKE THAT?!!

I SURRENDER!!

I SURRENDER!!

KAME-KICHI!!

THOK

ARRGH!!
HEY /!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!

THOR

OH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU CAN'T HEAR.

ARGH!

HEY!

THOR

SOMEONE, STOP HIM.

STOP HIM!!

THOK

IT'S TENKI!!

NOW GO HOME!

DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS!!

GOT IT?!

BUT, KAMEKICHI...
YOU CAN'T HEAR ME.

I CAN'T KEEP CALLING YOU "THE FREAK'S KID".

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

YOUR NAME...

WHAT'S... YOUR NAME?
TENKI

KOJIRÔ...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

RIGHT?

IT'S A GOOD NAME, HUH?

WILL YOU BE MY MASTER?

YOU GOT ME GOOD...

......
KOJIRO,
PLEASE...

LET ME
BE YOUR
DISCIPLE...

AS
QUICKLY
AS I
CAN...

I
WANT TO
BECOME
STRONG...

FWEEEE

THUP

KOJIRO,
PLease...

LET ME
BE YOUR
DISCIPLE...
About the Author

*VAGABOND* was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. In 2003, Inoue was nominated for an Eisner Award for best writer/artist. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *suzuri* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.
Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

**Ito Ittosai** *(Dates unknown)*
Founder of the Ittoryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

**Sasaki Kojiro**
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi. Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujoryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

**The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara**
The Warring States or Sengoku period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo*, and by 1600, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1588, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

**Takuan Soho** *(1573-1645)*
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

**The Yagyu Clan**
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1608) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

**Yoshioka Kempo** *(dates unknown)*
A distinguished warrior during the Sengoku period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the *Kyo-hachi* style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the *Yoshioka* style. In the context of Inoue's *WAGABOND*, as well as in Yoshihisa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.
"...Inoue's skills as a comics creator makes VAGABOND outstanding. This really is one of the best comics currently being produced. I buy every book as soon as it's published and once you take a look yourself, you'll do the same."

—Greg McElhatton, iComics.com

Miyamoto Musashi is destined to be Japan's most celebrated samurai, a man revered as a sword-saint. But every great warrior needs a worthy rival and Sasaki Kojirō is destined to be Musashi's legendary opponent in the most well known duel in Japanese history. This volume goes into the background and childhood of the man famed for his deadly "swallow cut" sword stroke.